

**Introduced by Senators Scott, Aanestad, Chesbro, Cox, Florez,  
Ortiz, and Torlakson**

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Leslie, Negrete McLeod, Pavley,  
Ruskin, and Strickland)

February 16, 2005

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 23— Relative to Lyme Disease  
Awareness Week.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 23, as introduced, Scott. Lyme Disease Awareness Week.

This measure would proclaim May 4 through May 10, 2005, as  
Lyme Disease Awareness Week.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, Lyme disease is caused by the spirochete (a  
2 corkscrew-shaped bacteria) called *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is  
3 transmitted by the western black-legged tick. Lyme disease was  
4 first identified in North America in the 1970s in Lyme,  
5 Connecticut, the town for which it was then named. This disease  
6 has since been reported from many areas of the country,  
7 including 54 counties in California. Its spread is essentially  
8 global, having been reported in 30 countries on 6 continents and  
9 several islands. Lyme disease is, thus, not “rare” and 25% of its  
10 victims are under 15 years of age; and

11 WHEREAS, Lyme disease mimics many other diseases and is  
12 called the second “great imitator” after syphilis. Patients are  
13 often misdiagnosed with more familiar conditions, including  
14 chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic  
15 later sclerosis, Lou Gehrig's Disease, or Parkinson's disease, for  
16 which there is no cure, only palliative remedies. Manifestations

1 of cognitive and memory impairment from neurological Lyme  
2 disease are commonly misdiagnosed as depression or other  
3 mental conditions; and

4 WHEREAS, Prompt treatment with antibiotics during early  
5 Lyme disease can cure the infection and prevent complications of  
6 progressive Lyme disease. If treatment is delayed, treatment can  
7 be difficult and accompanied by progressive debilitation, and  
8 recovery will take much longer. Lyme disease inadequately  
9 treated can lead to death; and

10 WHEREAS, In California, the western black-legged tick  
11 (*Ixodes pacificus*) transmits the bacteria that cause Lyme disease.  
12 Western black-legged ticks are most common in the coastal  
13 regions and along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada range.  
14 Ticks prefer cool moist environments such as shaded grasses,  
15 shrubs, and leaf litter under trees in oak woodlands; and

16 WHEREAS, Ticks have three life stages. The larvae and  
17 nymphs are found in low, moist vegetation such as in leaf litter.  
18 Adults are found on the tips of grasses and shrubs, often along  
19 trails. Nymphs and adult females of the western black-legged  
20 tick can transmit Lyme disease bacterium to humans. Because  
21 nymphs are tiny and difficult to see, they may not be removed  
22 promptly. Nymphs are most active in spring and early summer,  
23 when people are most likely to be outdoors. Adult ticks are most  
24 active from fall through early spring. A blood engorged female  
25 tick looks somewhat like a chocolate covered raisin and should  
26 be promptly removed by being pulled out and straight up with  
27 tweezers from underneath; and

28 WHEREAS, There are fewer than 40 “Lyme literate”  
29 physicians in clinical practice in California, resulting in frequent  
30 misdiagnosis and under-treatment of patients. This  
31 marginalization has led to broken families, financial hardship,  
32 job losses, increased numbers of people on disability or welfare,  
33 and even death. We have a hidden public health epidemic in need  
34 of being addressed promptly; and

35 WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
36 (CDC) made Lyme disease a nationally notifiable condition in  
37 1982. Over 125,000 cases have since been reported nationwide,  
38 making Lyme disease the most frequently reported vector-borne  
39 disease. In 2002, the number of cases reported increased by 40%

1 over the prior year to 23,763 cases. The CDC estimates that only  
2 10% of Lyme disease cases are actually reported; and

3 WHEREAS, The first recognized human case in California  
4 occurred in 1978 in a hiker from Sonoma County. Passive  
5 surveillance for Lyme disease cases began at the State  
6 Department of Health Services in 1989. As of 2002, over 1,700  
7 cases have been reported from 54 of 58 counties, exceeding all  
8 other vector transmitted diseases in California; and

9 WHEREAS, Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations  
10 requires that physicians report all newly diagnosed cases of  
11 Lyme disease to their local health department. Laboratory  
12 reporting of positive Lyme disease tests will begin in early 2005  
13 and is expected to increase the number of patients identified; and

14 WHEREAS, In 2004, the International Lyme and Associated  
15 Diseases Society developed “Evidence-based Guidelines for the  
16 Management of Lyme Disease,” published in Expert Review and  
17 Anti-infective Ther.: 2(1), 2004. These guidelines should be  
18 required reading for practioners treating infectious diseases and a  
19 key reference for training future physicians, nurse practitioners,  
20 and school nurses. It is now clear that long term antibiotic  
21 treatment of chronic Lyme disease can be effective; and

22 WHEREAS, In 1999, Senate Bill No. 1115 (Chesbro; Chapter  
23 668 of the Statutes of 1999) established the Lyme Disease  
24 Advisory Committee (LDAC) to provide information and service  
25 to the Lyme patient community; and

26 WHEREAS, In 2004, Assembly Bill No. 1091 (Negrete  
27 McLeod; Chapter 262 of the Statutes of 2004) revised the  
28 method by which the State Department of Health Services may  
29 modify the list of reportable diseases. This bill, cosponsored by  
30 the Health Officers Association of California and the California  
31 Lyme Disease Association, was originally designed to make  
32 Lyme disease laboratory reportable but broadened to modernize  
33 the existing reporting system; and

34 WHEREAS, The Legislature finds that this disease is a hidden  
35 epidemic that presents a major health threat to all Californians;  
36 now, therefore, be it

37 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*  
38 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature of the State of California

- 1 proclaims May 4 through May 10, 2005, as Lyme Disease
- 2 Awareness Week.

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